AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

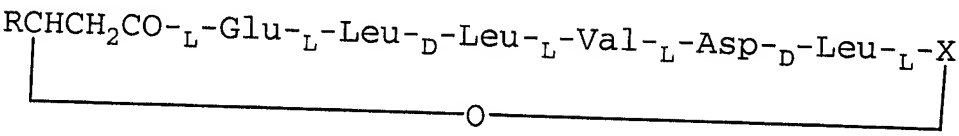
LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (withdrawn): An oil-based thickening gel composition comprising (a) an anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure, (b) water and/or a polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more, (c) a tocopherol compound and (d) an oil component.

2. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 1, wherein the addition amount of (c) the tocopherol compound is from 0.01 to 2% by mass based on the oil-based thickening gel composition.

3. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 1, wherein the amount of (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is from 0.01 to 5% by mass, the amount of (b) the water and/or the polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more is from 0.01 to 70% by mass and the amount of (d) the oil component is from 30 to 99% by mass.

4. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 1, wherein (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is surfactin represented by the following formula (1)



(1)

wherein X represents an amino acid residue selected from the group consisting of leucine, isoleucine, valine, glycine, serine, alanine, threonine, asparagine, glutamine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid, lysine, arginine, cysteine, methionine, phenylalanine, tyrosine, tryptophan, histidine, proline, 4-hydroxyproline and homoserine, and R represents a normal alkyl group having from 8 to 14 carbon atoms, an isoalkyl group having from 8 to 14 carbon atoms or an anteisoalkyl group having from 8 to 14 carbon atoms,

its homologue, and/or salts thereof.

5. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 4, wherein X is leucine, isoleucine or valine.

6. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 4, wherein (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is sodium surfactin.

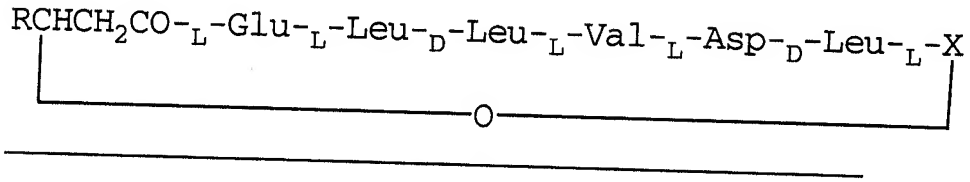
7. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 1, wherein (d) the oil component is one or more selected from polyoxyethyleneglyceryl ether fatty acid esters and polyoxyethylene sorbitol ether fatty acid esters.

8. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 1, wherein (c) the tocopherol compound is one or more selected from the group consisting of α-tocopherol, β-tocopherol, γ-tocopherol, δ-tocopherol, tocopherol acetate and tocopherol succinate.

9. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more is one or more selected from the group consisting of glycerin, diglycerin, polyglycerin, sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, multitol, erythritol, pentaerythritol, glucose, saccharose, fructose, lactose, maltose, xylose and trehalose.

10. (withdrawn): The oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 9, wherein the polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more is glycerin and/or sorbitol.

11. (currently amended): A method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition, comprising ~~addition of~~ adding (c) a tocopherol compound to an oil-based thickening gel composition comprising (a) an anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure, (b) water and/or a polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more and (d) from 30 to 99% by mass of an oil component being one or more selected from polyoxyethyleneglyceryl ether fatty acid esters and polyoxyethylene sorbitol ether fatty acid esters, and wherein (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is surfactin represented by the following formula (1)



wherein X represents an amino acid residue selected from the group consisting of leucine, isoleucine, valine, glycine, serine, alanine, threonine, asparagine, glutamine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid, lysine, arginine, cysteine, methionine, phenylalanine, tyrosine, tryptophan, histidine, proline, 4-hydroxyproline and homoserine, and R represents a normal alkyl group having from 8 to 14 carbon atoms, an isoalkyl group having from 8 to 14 carbon atoms or an anteisoalkyl group having from 8 to 14 carbon atoms,

and/or salts thereof,

wherein the storage stability comprises preventing separation of the composition.

12. (original): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 11, wherein the addition amount of (c) the tocopherol compound is from 0.01 to 2% by mass.

13. (currently amended): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 11, wherein the oil-based thickening gel composition comprises from 0.01 to 5% by mass of (a) an anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure, and from 0.01 to 70% by mass of (b) water and/or a polyhydric alcohol having a valence of 3 or more ~~and from 30 to 99% by mass of (d) an oil component~~.

14. (canceled).

15. (currently amended): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim ~~14~~ 11, wherein X is leucine, isoleucine or valine.

16. (currently amended): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim ~~14~~ 11, wherein (a) the anionic surfactant having a lipopeptide structure is sodium surfactin.

17. (canceled).

18. (original): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 11, wherein (c) the tocopherol compound is one or more selected from the group consisting of α-tocopherol, β-tocopherol, γ-tocopherol, δ-tocopherol, tocopherol acetate and tocopherol succinate.

19. (withdrawn): A cosmetic comprising the oil-based thickening gel composition described in claim 1.

20. (new): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 11, wherein R is isoalkyl group having 11 carbon atoms, X is leucine, the polyhydric alcohol is water and glycerin, the tocopherol compound is δ-tocopherol and the oil component is polyoxyethylene (20) glyceryl triiostearate and glycerin tri-2-ethylhexanoate.

21. (new): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 20, wherein component (a) is surfactin of formula (1) in which R is isoalkyl group having 11 carbon atoms and X is leucine, component (b) is water and glycerin, component (c) is δ-tocopherol and component (d) is polyoxyethylene (20) glyceryl triiostearate and glycerin tri-2-ethylhexanoate.

22. (new): The method for improving storage stability of an oil-based thickening gel composition as claimed in claim 21, wherein the surfactin is sodium surfactin.